



STATE OF MARYLAND

DHMH

Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene

201 W. Preston Street • Baltimore, Maryland 21201

Martin O'Malley, Governor – Anthony G. Brown, Lt. Governor – John M. Colmers, Secretary

Community Health Administration

Peter A. Sybinsky, Ph.D., Director

Richard W. Stringer, Deputy Director

MEMORANDUM

Date: July 16, 2008

To: Maryland Camp Directors

From: Katherine A. Feldman, DVM, MPH
State Public Health Veterinarian

Re: Reducing the risk of rabies at summer camp

The summer camp season has begun and brings with it increased opportunities to observe and interact with wild animals. While observation of wildlife is encouraged and often one of the primary goals of attending summer camp, it is important to realize that direct contact with wild animals can result in disease transmission. Rabies is a disease caused by a virus that attacks the nervous system and is almost always fatal once symptoms appear. The virus is transmitted in the saliva of rabid animals, typically by a bite. In Maryland, rabies is found most frequently in raccoons, bats, skunks, foxes, cats, and groundhogs. However, all mammals, including other wildlife, farm animals, and dogs, can get infected with and transmit rabies. When a person has been bitten or otherwise exposed (e.g. scratched) to a potentially rabid animal, treatment to prevent rabies may be warranted.

Be aware that bats may sometimes seek shelter in camp cabins and can result in mass exposures of campers. If you receive any reports of bats found in cabins at your camp during camp season, please contact your local health department for a risk assessment to determine whether campers or camp staff may have been exposed.

To reduce the risk of rabies transmission at summer camp, instruct campers and camp staff:

- Not to touch or feed wild or stray animals.
- Avoid sick animals and those acting in an unusual manner.
- Cover garbage cans securely and do not leave food outside.
- Prevent bats from entering buildings and cabins.
- Following a bite or other exposure to an animal, wash wounds immediately with soap and

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water and contact local public health authorities to determine whether treatment for rabies is indicated.

Additional resources include:

- For information on how to bat-proof cabins, please refer to the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) website at <http://www.dnr.state.md.us/wildlife/bats/nhpbatintro.asp>. Your local health department can also provide bat-proofing tips.
- For additional information on rabies, bats and summer camps, please refer to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) website: http://www.cdc.gov/rabies/qanda/bats_camps.html.
- "Take a Bite Out of Rabies" brochure (included) with additional information on rabies in Maryland.

Please contact the Center for Veterinary Public Health (410-767-5649, cvph@dnhmh.state.md.us) with any questions about rabies in Maryland and how to reduce the risk of rabies transmission to summer campers.

We wish you a fun and rabies-free camp season!

cc: John Krick, PhD
David Blythe, MD, MPH
Peter Sybinsky, PhD
Rich Stringer
John Hammond
Pamela Engle
Local Health Department Rabies Coordinators
Local Health Department Communicable Disease Directors
Dr. Cindy Driscoll, State Wildlife Veterinarian, Department of Natural Resources